

# BitterSweet

January 1979 *The Magazine of Maine's Hills & Lakes Region* Vol. II, No. 3

75¢



Dear Peter-

1-79  
Sure's gittin' cold these past few mornins.  
Bout 30 below round the teeth an' 24  
below round the ankles. That was when  
I was shovelin' snow. I was workin'  
pretty fast ya' know, goin' so fast the  
snow was meltin' right round the shovel. I  
stopped just a second mind ya', an' that  
shovel froze solid, right on the walkway. I  
decided right then to git some hot water  
to thaw out that shovel. I hurried right  
on. Tore my gloves. They was frozen tight  
to the shovel. My boots were frozen too.  
I climbed outta' those, an' skedaddled into  
the house. Now Miss Busybody happened by  
an' started to talk to the shovel,  
thinkin' it was me. When the shovel didn't  
answer back she began ta' thrash the  
daylights outta' that shovel. It sprung  
back, caught her right between the  
lookers. That's when the shovel was  
battered to smithereens. She busted  
the glass in the storm door, made  
an awful mess of the birdfeeder,  
tore my boots to shreds an'  
leveled my fence at the end  
of the walk.

Be seeing ya!

Bert.

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you need any ice melting we  
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and 50 pound bags.  
Keep an eye on Miss Busybody.  
She stopped by the other day  
and bought a large supply  
of eggs.

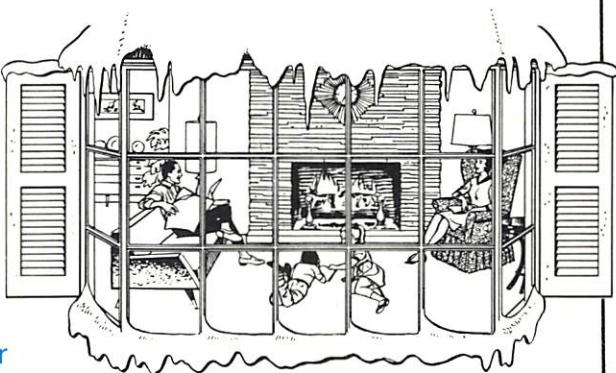
Peter

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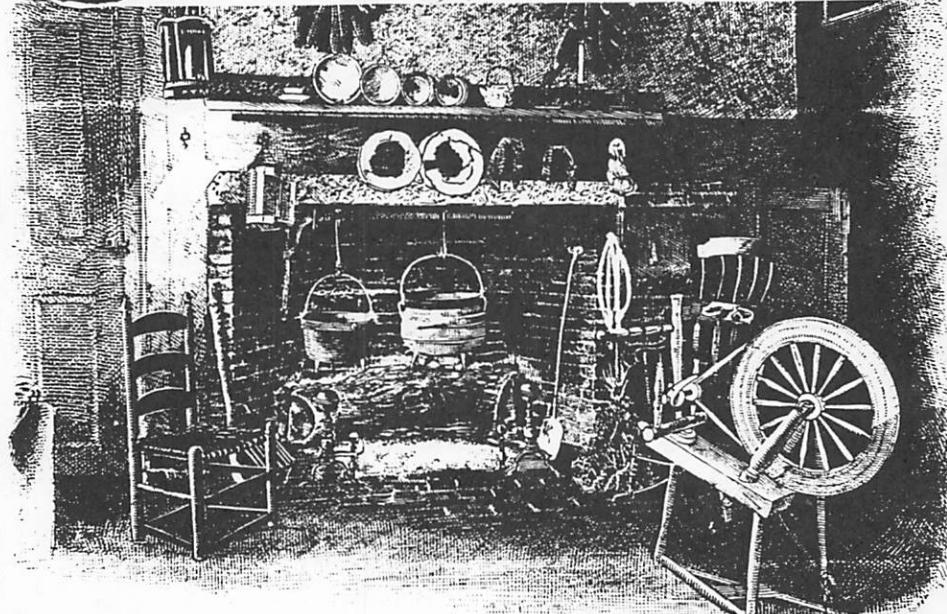
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## BitterSweet Views

We're in the process of preparing a questionnaire for circulation in the February issue. We want to know what our readers are like, and what they like best and least about the magazine. The information will help us plan advertising as well as future editorial content.

We know that we're asking for it, particularly from subscribers, as we've already heard a fair amount of unsolicited griping from subscribers who receive their issues later than the time they appear on the newsstands, and from those whose subscriptions don't start up as soon as they have hoped. To avoid an onslaught of letters in this regard, here's an explanation of subscription procedure:

To give us time to process an order for bulk mailing, a subscription must be received prior to the 15th of the month preceding the beginning month. Any subscription received after that date will not start up for two months. We have to work it this way, since all the magazines are mailed at once. To send current or back issues, we have to mail separately and charge over and above the cost of the subscription.

The best way to send a subscription is to fill in the form found inside the magazine and mail it (with payment) to P. O. Box 301, Oxford, ME 04270. Since we are not set up for handling subscriptions at the editorial office, any received by telephone and without payment will be processed slower, not faster.

With regard to mailing, because the magazine is sent out third class, it sometimes takes what seems like an eternity for it to arrive at its destination, particularly out of state. Folks who write us because they're afraid we have not received their order when the magazine has failed to arrive the following month, may simply not have allowed enough time for it to happen.

Local mailing should be faster. Until now, we have mailed magazines at the same time as we have taken them to the newsstands, making a two or three day lapse between the time BitterSweet appeared on the streets and the time it appeared at local homes. Quite honestly, we had no idea it would make much difference. But, because of subscribers' complaints, from now on we will be mailing a couple of days earlier than we deliver it to the stands so that, if all goes well, it will arrive at homes and stands simultaneously.

So, if subscription concerns are your chief complaints, it might help to know that we've heard at least some of them. But sharpen your pencils anyway and be thinking about other things you'd like to share with us come February. We'll be ready.

Sandy Wilhelm

# BitterSweet

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**Contributions:** We encourage the submission of manuscripts, artwork and photography. We do ask that all such material be from local contributors and of local interest. Please submit to The Editor, BitterSweet, at the above address. We will return your material if it is accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Payment is made following publication. BitterSweet cannot be responsible for unsolicited material.

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# Sweet Finds

## SOME DOWN-TO-EARTH LONG-DISTANCE WINTER DRIVING TIPS

from Lucretia Douglas, West Baldwin

1. Have snow tires mounted by mid-November so the garage will have time to do a good job. (Well, maybe next year.)
2. Carry a shovel, three or four plastic bags of salted sand, and a broom in the trunk or the back of a station wagon. In case of a heavy snow storm, the broom is by far the best tool for clearing off the car. Don't forget to brush off rear window, headlights, and tail lights that may be blown full of snow.
3. In case of freezing rain, car doors will sometimes freeze shut. Keep a spray can of windshield de-icer on hand. Spray around doors before attempting to open. Instead of kicking doors, try pushing hard on them. Heat the switch key with kitchen matches or lighter to thaw out the lock on the door. Always carry a watertight bottle of wooden matches and/or lighter. Glue a piece of sandpaper from a matchbox to the side of the bottle for striking matches.
4. Carry two windshield scrapers. (One will always get broken.)
5. Put a heavy woolen blanket over vinyl car seats. It sure feels good when temperatures are below zero.
6. Put one or two heavy coats in the car and leave them there for the winter. An extra heavy blanket is also a good idea. They may save your life someday.
7. Buy a piece of heavy (4 mil or more) plastic at the hardware store to cover your windshield to prevent ice and snow build-up. Get a piece long enough so that an end can be shut in each door and wide enough to cover the whole windshield and out over wipers. The concealed wiper may look a lot better, but it can cause a lot of trouble if it gets packed with ice and snow.

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## JANUARY

All calendars and diaries start with the month of January, which seems a mistake to people who live in Maine. January is snow-bound and the calendar seems nearly at a standstill. In small towns, handmade rugs, bedspreads, and fancywork of all kinds are started for next August's church sale. Families are making out their orders to mail order companies and talking over plans for this year's vacation.

All my old diaries, of course, were started in January and the childish handwriting in some of them is hard to read. I find recordings like these: "Mother made a new blue dress," "Got 100 in spelling today," "Got stung twice by a bee." Then, vastly more sophisticated: "Graduated from grammar school," "Went to a dance. Mother and Dad went too," "Met a good-looking fellow called 'Doc,'" "Went for a ride with Doc in his two-cylinder Maxwell." And finally, on a certain day in June: "Doc and I were married today."

Turning the pages, I see where we moved into our own home. The ups and downs of our married life are recorded and, as the years passed, the births of our children, Norman, Lois, Kenneth, Glen Janice—all meaning so much but noted briefly in the diaries. "9½ lb. boy born today, named Norman," and so on, tersely, down through

the family. Maine diaries, like Maine folks, are "sparing" with their words.

It is hard to find any pleasant things to say about January, for as I look back in the old diaries, I can find nothing recorded but "very cold," "big blizzard," and "fifteen below zero today." The monotony was broken in 1925, on January fifteen by the arrival of my oldest son; and fifteen years later, on the same date, daughter Janice arrived. But the weather played an important part even in these events. If there is any fun in having a baby, January in Maine can put a damper on it—especially if you live thirty miles from a hospital and ten from a doctor! However, we all came through it safely, just as hundreds of January mothers and babies do.

Looking over these old diaries, I find nothing interesting or important to outsiders, just an ordinary life of joy, sorrow, worries, and all the everyday things that make up living. Yet I find experiences that city dwellers never know and things that people living in other states could never understand.

We did not live in a town or village when I was a small girl. There were only a few isolated houses and we had to furnish our own amusements. These we never lacked, and there was never a time when we said, as

# MAINE IS FOREVER

by Inez Farrington

Inez Farrington was born in 1904 in East Stoneham, Maine. At an early age, she felt compelled to write down her thoughts and feelings about the people and events that shaped her life. The practice continued right into her adulthood and after many years the penciled notes on plain paper began to take the form of a book. Many hours of writing and rewriting, copying and recopying, resulted in her first volume, **Maine Is Forever**, published in 1954.

It is a chronicle, a diary, a savoring of the life of a native Mainer in the first 50 years of this century. The sorrow is here and the gladness, too; but more than that, Mrs. Farrington has captured some of the inner awareness and appreciation for life and simple living characterized by Mainers of that era.

We proudly present the first chapter of that book, and each month we will print a successive chapter.

—Ben Tucker

my children sometimes do, "Mama, what can I do now?" Our imaginations worked overtime and we were always doing something to raise the neighbors' eyebrows or cause Mother to wonder what we would think of next. We made pets of all the animals on our farm, and sometimes it proved too much for their own good. My best loved pet was a rooster named Theodore; for at that time I was resolved to change my name to Josephine when I grew up, and to marry a man named Theodore. Theodore returned all my love and had perfect faith in me. Of course, all the chickens were properly housed in the winter in a warm house, but afternoons while Mother was busy I would sneak Theodore out and soon taught him to enjoy being hauled on a sled. Dad knew of this and warned me never to take him out on a cold day, but neither Theodore nor I could resist temptation. One especially bitter afternoon I kept him out until the cold got the best of me, but he showed no signs of the trip until several days later when the weather warmed up. Then one day when I went to get him, I found to my great horror that both feet had dropped off! Theodore had loved not wisely but too well, and his feet had frozen. My tears and pleas saved his life, and my old

diary shows he lived for several years with no feet—flying and hopping after me wherever I went. I never married a man named Theodore but I am sure if I had, his love would not have stood the test of time that my first love did.

We saw no hardships in our life even though we had no open roads, telephone, daily paper, electricity, or radio. I can remember, when I was a little girl, how we were shut in after a snowstorm. (Not that we minded—we weren't going any place!) About the middle of the day someone would say, "Here comes the roller." It looked like a gigantic barrel and was hauled by four or six horses, depending on how bad the storm had been. To the eyes of a ten-year-old it made a beautiful track. And there was no end to the games you could play on this track if you were bundled up and out in the cold, crisp air. After the roller had been through our little neighborhood, you could walk to a neighbor's house. Or, if you had a horse and sleigh, you could drive six miles to the store. Mail came to the store, and if you expected anything important, you walked to see if it had come. Otherwise you just went without mail until some neighbor happened to be at the store and picked it up for everyone.

There were none of today's problems in

bringing up children. We ate well, dressed well, celebrated our birthdays, and went to the county fair once a year. That was enough for children in those days. We minded when spoken to, we had a nickel's worth of candy when Dad went to the store, and a whole quarter of a dollar for the fair. We were happy and contented, and if we had any little problems we knew Dad and Mother could settle them.

Today, with modern snow removal equipment, those little neighborhoods are not so isolated; but Maine still has farms, miles from the main road, which snowplows cannot always reach, especially after a hard winter blow. Yet people live there and are happy and contented. It is not easy to get acquainted with them. Perhaps their friendliness has been chilled by the bitter cold; or perhaps we Maine people have inherited some of the quietness of the deep woods and the shyness of the scarlet tanager.

We are proud of our interesting people. I do not mean the authors, poets, singers and artists. Naturally we are proud of them, but I refer to the folks you are likely to meet on the farm, twelve miles off the main road, who have no television, washing machine, or bathroom. If you can get to know them, you will find them simple, loveable folks. They are happy and satisfied with life. Their children are grown and come home for holidays. They own their home, two cows, some hens, a horse, and have a phone which works at least four months out of the year. By "listening in" they can get all the news they feel any need of. They have a garden, plenty of wood, kerosene lamps, and an "outhouse," which is not called by any other polite or dignified name. It is *out*, so it is an outhouse. (We call things by their right names in Maine!) They go out through rain, snow, and bitter weather to the little house that is furnished with pictures from "Life" and the Sears catalog. They see no hardships in their way of living. They are neither queer nor quaint—just an old couple taking care of themselves and enjoying a little rest in their own way at the closing of a long hard life.

I can think of one Maine man who could have been called "quaint," but I am sure his friends never thought of him that way. This was "Uncle Levi Durgin," one of the early settlers in town. He was "Uncle" to everyone and earned his title as Maine men do. The rather strange thing about him was a set of

double teeth, both upper and lower. His beard was black, and even as a boy his hair was as white as a Rinso-washed sheet. Ripley once had Uncle Levi's picture in his "Believe It Or Not" column. There is also a story of the time when he was shingling his barn and the ladder slipped and fell to the ground. Quickly he grabbed at the eaves and hung on with his teeth until help arrived. I don't know how true the story is—you can believe it or not. But the fact remains that Uncle Levi must have been a quaint and odd-looking man, though I doubt if the folks who knew him ever gave this a thought. I doubt if his wife ever did, who, it is said, put every bit of food on his plate that he ever ate. He refused to eat unless she placed the food on his plate, cut the meat, and put gravy on his potato. Once when he was eating away from home and she was not with him, he ate nothing until a pie was passed him. Instead of taking a single piece, he ate the entire pie! But if anyone thought Uncle Levi queer, it didn't bother him any. He never ate in a hotel, he never saw one, and if he ever had, his wife would still have had to put his food on his plate. That's what his wife was for, wasn't it? She never played bridge, rode in a car, or saw a movie. She never saw anything queer about their life or about him. He was a good husband, father, and provider. The only thing she ever said about him was that, "Levi was terrible set in his ways." But he was her man and she had everything any woman could ask for.

At one time four generations of our family were keeping a diary, yet in none of these or in any other can be found any records of the settling of our town. It has been said that the happiest places are those without any history. So that may be the reason our town is a happy place in which to live, even though it is only a speck on the Maine map and has never been publicized except by the summer guests who return year after year.

The early settlers were named McKeen or McAllister, and settled in the north end of town. Farms were cleared and homes built. A McAllister married a McKeen, and from then on the Scots had it. My grandmother married a Files and came to Maine as a bride from Pennsylvania. Homesick and blue, she was introduced to McKeens and McAllisters until she longed to hear some other name. One day she saw Grandfather talking to a man in the yard and she asked someone who it was. As he replied, "Oh, that is Jones," she



*Photo by Bill Haynes*

# BitterSweet

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thought, "At last I can meet someone with a good old-fashioned name!" Granddad brought the gentleman in the house and proudly introduced him as "my good friend, Jones McAllister"—and Gram went to bed in a fit of homesick crying. The hills of Oxford County still wear the scars of a McKeen's axe and a McAllister's saw. There will always be a bit of old Scotland in our town.

There are no monuments to those early settlers, only cellar holes and stone walls and perhaps a few old apple trees almost lost in the new growth. The stone walls endure, for nothing ever destroys them but man. Time and weather only add beauty to them. We never disturb them: they are left in memory, a monument to those who made their lasting footprints on the rocky hills of Maine.

Looking through old diaries we find no startling secrets nor secret dreams. And they would be no good in a murder trial or court, for we have recorded only everyday events that mean nothing to anyone but the diary's owner. Yet as I read them over, they would mean a great deal to people who have lived in Maine or have only been here through the summer. For summer people never know Maine as it really is. Some who have been coming for years may think they do; but how many of them know our small country stores as anything but a place in which to buy groceries? When they go in they are waited on quickly and carefully, for the grocers like the extra trade, and the outsider does not notice the deep silence as the townspeople watch to see what they buy and how much the bill is. Those who think the old-fashioned country store with its stove and cracker barrel have disappeared are entirely mistaken. The crackers do come in boxes now and usually the stove burns oil, but the principle of the thing is the same. Stores are the gathering place, the clubhouse, and social center of small towns. Every evening you can find the members there, cussing and discussing the affairs of the town, the neighbors, and the nation. If you want news, you can always find it at the store. They know how much so-and-so paid for his second-hand car; who is getting married and who is having a baby; just where the president is making his mistake and how they could do it better; how all sick folks are; and just what we can expect from the atom bomb. They know which ones pay cash and who runs an account. They know who lives

"beyond their means," and who scrimps on their meals. They know everyone's business and no one minds. They argue and dispute and go home mad but are back the next evening, friends with everyone and ready to start in again.

Checker games have given 'way to sixty-three and poker, and there is usually a game going on somewhere. It may be in the back room or behind some boxes, for gambling is frowned upon in Maine. There is also a great deal of betting, the poor people's way of playing the stock market, and at the end of the year they will about break even. Bets are never very high, usually no more than twenty-five or fifty cents, but with a dozen men betting, the winner collects a nice little sum. If it is a cold night, they will bet that certain cars won't start the next morning without being pushed. If it summer, they will bet the thermometer will run higher tomorrow than it did today.

The highest bet ever made in our store was after a big snowstorm in the days before open roads, when the visitors bet the storekeeper five dollars that he couldn't carry five gallons of kerosene a quarter of a mile and back without setting it down. With someone trailing him through knee-deep snow to see that there was no cheating, he did it and collected the money. There are never any hard feelings over betting arguments. It is the country people's relaxation, their fun after a hard day's work, their only chance to visit with each other.

My diary has its records of sorrow for January as well as its peace and happiness. Even now tears come to my eyes as I read, "Gram passed away this morning;" the same girl bride from a far-away state who lived in Maine and loved it for over sixty years. In her last illness her mind was not clear and we learned from her simple prayers the creed by which she lived. We heard it often when she thought it was night and time to say her prayers: "Lord give me strength to do the best I can tomorrow." Gram need have no fear. For ninety years the Lord gave her strength to do her best through a life of hard work and sacrifice. Her death made no ripple on the sea of national affairs; there was no notice of it except in local papers. She was just another old lady who had passed on, yet she left a host of friends and a large family who loved her dearly and I know that whatever she is doing "up there," she is doing

Although common schooling (reading, writing and arithmetic) in Norway dates from the summer of 1790 when Mrs. Susan Everett kept a school in her house at Norway Center, learning on a higher level had to wait until the early 1800's. As in all frontier settlements, building shelter and providing

town) and those young men attending had to be able to afford the fee, as little as it was, and have the available time. For many of Norway's youths in the early 1800's, these requirements would not be realized.

Plans must have been well underway by the mid-1800's for the opening of what was

## *The Norway Liberal Institute*

by Richard Durnin

from "Old Maids and Married Women"  
to Moral Philosophy and Ancient History

for one's livelihood came before the advancement of education.

It was the Rev. Noah Cressey, a graduate of Williams College and the minister of Norway Center's First Congregational Church, who first offered youth what would now be called secondary education. Soon after his arrival from Massachusetts in 1806, Rev. Cressey taught a winter term in the village school (the old building, erected in 1805, stood on the site of the later Upper Primary, now the Western Maine Art Center). And as soon as he was able to occupy his new parsonage in 1809, the Reverend took in some young men for "those branches of education taught in our academies," as David Noyes, one of his pupils and later Norway's first historian, put it. It was Cressey's intent to fit some of these young men for jobs as district school teachers, a field then essentially dominated by males—many of whom were "very limited in their literary requirements"—to quote Noyes again.

David Noyes, who had taught in the village school and at Pike's Hill from 1809 to 1810, later maintained a summer school of secondary grade in the village from 1810 to 1815. Both the Cressey and Noyes schools were private (that is, not supported by the

to be Norway's first well-established secondary school, the well-staffed, co-educational Norway Liberal Institute. *The Advertiser* of January 29, 1847, carried the opening announcement: The Norway Liberal Institute was to commence on the 10th of March for a twelve-week term. Ebenezer P. Hinds came to Norway to take charge of the new institution. Hinds had attended Bowdoin for a year, but took his degree from Harvard in 1844. His stay in Norway lasted only a year. In May of 1848 he went to South Paris to head the newly-opened Oxford Normal Institute. He subsequently served as a member of the Seventh Maine Volunteers during the Civil War and died at sea near Philadelphia.

The first classes of the Norway Liberal Institute met in a building at the corner of Main and Paris streets, owned by Major Henry Millett. Millett had furnished the upper room of the structure for dancing, and it was in this hall that the first scholars sat, amidst rather crude arrangements. The building was moved in 1867 southeasterly to Winter Street where it became the home of William C. Cole.

The first exhibition, a sort of public examination marking the end of the fall term, was held in the Universalist Church on



*Souvenir cup and saucer portraying the old Norway Liberal Institute building destroyed in the fire of 1894*

November 24, 1847. Two young men presented a dialogue on "Old Maids and Married Women" along with other disputations. Dr. Osgood N. Bradbury, to whom we are indebted for a description of that opening year through his columns "Norway In The Forties" which appeared in *The Advertiser* in 1886—was a member of that first class.

A catalogue for the Norway Liberal Institute, which placed the institution on a competitive basis with other secondary schools in the area, appeared toward the end of 1847. The catalogue presented Norway as a "healthy, pleasant, and social village"—a representation which would hold up today.

Anticipating the coming of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad (which opened to South Paris in 1850), the booklet stressed the accessibility of the town. The prospectus promised that the course of study would be "thorough and comprehensive," and a glance at the listed course offerings, with the books required, leaves no doubt as to the validity of that claim. The Institute was intended to be an academy of high grade. Among its offerings were Latin, Greek, French, German, Spanish, Italian, mathematics through calculus, chemistry, astronomy, logic, moral philosophy, geography, English

grammar and composition, anatomy and physiology, bookkeeping, ancient history, government, surveying, geology, mineralogy and botany.

A complete course would take three years, with three terms each year. Fees depended on the course of study pursued and upon extra subjects taken. The term cost was \$4 for the "Higher English" and the "Language" curriculums. For "Common English," the fee was \$3. Extras ranged from \$1 for penmanship to \$6 for music.

At a time when boys were more likely to receive a secondary education than were girls, it is interesting to note that this first class of 174 students had 91 females compared with 83 males. What does this tell us about the youth population of Norway and vicinity in mid-19th century? Were there more girls than boys? Did the agricultural basis of the region demand the presence of most of the boys on the farm? Had the earlier Norway Female Seminary, which operated for a short time in 1846 under the direction of the Rev. Charles Soule, set in motion the impetus for the education of women?

Almost a third of the Institute's students came from towns other than Norway. A true mark of an independent secondary school of

good quality rested in its ability to attract students from beyond the locality. However, the school's student body was sprinkled with the familiar family names of old Norway and Paris. For the Millett clan, there were nine girls listed: Sara R., Harriet A., Mariah L., Eliza W., Sarah J., Louisa L. P., Mary P., and Rosalia A. Boarding could be arranged for a cost of \$1.25 to \$1.50 per week for young gentlemen, and from \$1 to \$1.25 for young ladies. The charge included room, meals, fuel, light, and laundry. There was some mention of starting a student boarding house, but the plan never materialized.

The Norway Liberal Institute had no land grants, state aid, or local funding. It had to rely upon its tuition for support. But during 1848 a school building was erected through popular subscription. The building was located at the east end of Main Street, just adjacent to Henry Millett's building which had been in use for classes during the school's opening year. Dedication ceremonies took place on October 24, 1848, with a Mr. Prince of New Gloucester giving the opening address.

The new building had a large general room on the first floor, with two recitation rooms on each side. Upstairs there was a large hall which would accommodate up to 600 people. It was here that public lectures and school exhibitions took place. Adjacent to the hall were rooms for a library and for scientific apparatus. The building was generally known as the "academy" building, although this designation was never legally given to the school held within.

Recognition of the Norway Liberal Institute by the State of Maine came on June 25, 1849, when the governor approved an Act of Incorporation by the Legislature. This act was the charter and listed the names of the eight trustees (Franklin Manning, Ezra Beal, Benjamin Tucker, Jr., Horatio Cole, Isaac Bradbury, Luther Pike, and Lorenzo Hathaway).

Each school day began with an assembly of the students for scripture reading and singing. Discipline was enforced: a daily attendance record was kept for the inspection of parents, and there was the threat that any dismissed student would be "noticed" in the annual catalogue. There were student societies, including "The Monadelphian" and the "Druelaian," two literary groups which were among the earliest ones. A school paper, *The Cathairian*

*Rill*, was published weekly. All of these classical names had their counterparts in other New England academies of the 19th century.

Jonathan G. Eveleth (Bowdoin 1847) followed Hinds as principal, and in the fall of 1850, Mark H. Dunnell (Colby 1849) came for a two-year stay. Dunnell was to become the most distinguished leader in the school's history. While he was at the Institute, he published *The Pine State News* (1850-1851), a newspaper devoted to "morality, education, agriculture, arts and news." In the spring of 1852, Dunnell went to Hebron Academy as principal. Later he practiced law in Norway, sat in the Maine Legislature, was State Superintendent of Schools, served in the Fifth Maine Volunteers during the Civil War, was appointed U.S. Consul to Vera Cruz, Mexico, sat in the Minnesota Legislature, served as Superintendent of Public Instruction in Minnesota, and capped his long and useful life as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for twenty years.

A number of principals followed Mark Dunnell, and by 1855 there is some evidence that the school's reputation had slipped. The staff had been reduced to the principal and an assistant, and an intermediate school (what would now be the upper grades) was kept on the lower floor of the building. In August of 1854, a "juvenile department" was advertised (at \$2 per term) for pupils under ten years of age. A poor report on the



Sara Jane Elliot, Decorator 743-2672



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Institute was submitted in the annual town report for 1855-1856. By now there was severe competition from neighboring secondary schools of good quality. The Norway and Paris newspapers carried advertisements for Hebron, Bethel, Bridgton, Paris Hill and South Paris institutions. Patronage of the Norway Liberal Institute by outsiders had fallen off. It was now almost entirely a village secondary school.

The town of Norway purchased the Institute building in 1856. The term "high school," by now in rather general use in educational circles, began to be applied to the school occasionally. An advertisement in *The Democrat* for August, 1857, was for the "High School at Norway" under the principalship of Bryon D. Verrill. It was still a quasi-private, tuition school and the charter of 1849 still governed it.

Charles Augustus Stephens, eminent Norway scientist and author of the popular rural tales which appeared regularly in the Boston weekly family magazine, *The Youth's Companion*, attended the Norway Liberal Institute for a few terms. Stephens is said to have studied there when Verrill was principal. If so, he must have attended during the period from the fall of 1856

through the spring of 1858. It is known that Stephens entered Kent's Hill Seminary in the fall of 1865, so he may also have attended the N.L.I. later than 1858.

Verrill had been the schoolmaster at District No. 11 (Noble's Corner) from 1853 to 1855 where young Charles first went to school. There is no record of Verrill having ever attended college. He seems to have been entirely self-educated, later studying law and practicing in Wiscasset and Portland. For a time, he served in the Maine Legislature.

"Joel Pierson," a schoolmaster in Stephens' stories, is thought to have been modeled on Verrill. Stephens also referred to the Institute as the "academy" in some of his stories. Lyceums were held there on Thursday evenings. Two students, one for each side of a question, would present their cases. Young Stephens often participated in these debates and later recalled what good training they were for public speaking.

After finishing Bowdoin College, Stephens served as principal of the N.L.I. for the winter term of 1869-1870. The town school report commented that good instructional methods were used and in the interest of the scholars appeared ahead of the previous year.

The ups and downs in the reputation of the Institute, through the 1850's and 60's, can be ascertained from comments in the town reports: "too little interest among parents and scholars...standard of scholarship is far too low (1858)...school has not fully met the wishes or expectations of its friends (1859)...school has attained a very high reputation...ranks with the best high schools in the state (1866)."

Teacher training for the common schools was an important contribution of the Norway Liberal Institute. Special lectures on teaching and "Teacher' Exercises" (advanced review of common school subjects) were offered. Until the impact of the state normal schools began to be felt in the rural areas, it was the academies that trained the majority of the district school teachers.

The Maine High School Act of 1873 provided the first state aid to high schools, resulting in a rapid increase in these schools. Reimbursement was given to the towns for one-half of the amount paid for teacher's wages (not to exceed \$500). Norway raised \$400 in 1873 for a "Free High School," and the town warrant for the March, 1874, Norway town meeting included an item "To



C. A. Stephens (1844 - 1931), Norway author,  
attended the Norway Liberal Institute in the late 1850's  
and served as Principal during 1869 - 1870

see what sum of money the town will vote and raise for a Free High School."

The last local printed reference to the school as the Norway Liberal Institute appears in the spring term announcement of March 12, 1872. It is possible to date the beginning of use of the term "Norway High School" at several points: either the acquisition of the institute building by the town in 1856; the 1873 Maine High School Act and Norway's appropriation of money for the school; or the appearance in 1878 of a printed announcement for the fall term of "Norway High School." This last date is perhaps the most valid beginning date as the graduation class of 1879 referred to the "first anniversary" of the high school at its exercises of May 16, 1879.

The N.H.S. announcement for the fall term of 1878 lists Orville W. Collins (Bates, 1876) as principal, Miss Alma Pendexter as assistant, and five teachers. The school was

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## JANUARY NIGHT

Pale lunar beams  
Light up the nightscape  
Black tree-skeletons  
Tiptoe across the snow.  
  
Insistent chilling wind  
Sounds despairing sighs  
Testing nervously each  
Mute and shuttered window.  
  
The house resists...  
Settling deeper to its foundation,  
Each log of this cabin  
Independently holding its own.  
  
Cold winter night,  
Brittle, bright, eerie...  
The northern horizon alive  
With leaping fingers of light.  
  
I imagine I hear  
The sounds of their colors  
Hissing the meanings  
Of this ancient rite.  
  
In the darkness I shiver,  
Moving close to the fire,  
Seeking warm light—  
Awaiting frail dawn.

Janice Bigelow  
West Minot

free to students from Norway, but outsiders were charged tuition (language course \$5, higher English \$4, common English \$3, and bookkeeping and music, respectively, \$3 and \$10 extra).

Common school teachers continued to be trained at the high school. A report of 1879 stated that "teachers who have graduated at our High School pass better examinations than those educated elsewhere, and their schools show better results."

Norway's great fire of May 9, 1894 consumed the old academy building, along with much of Main Street. At this time the school housed elementary grades on the first floor, with the high school above. A replacement was quickly erected, which resembled the old structure in many ways, and was ready for occupancy in 1895. This building was used until the brick building (now the Guy E. Rowe School) was built in 1929.

The history of the Norway High School drew to a close in 1961 when consolidation through School Administrative District #17, with the formation of Oxford Hills High School, came into being. The old 1895 building, threatened with demolition, remains as part of the Norway Elementary School Complex. ■

*Durnin, a summer resident of Norway Center, teaches the History of Education at The City College of New York.*

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...Page 5

8. Be careful using brakes. Try shifting to a lower gear on icy hills. If the brakes must be used, try pumping them gently.

9. In order to go up over big hills covered with snow, shift car into second gear quite a way before the hill, and make a run for it. It's when a car slows to shift (when in drive) that it loses its momentum and stalls on a hill.

10. Carry as much weight as possible over the rear wheels (unless the car is front-wheel drive) to give added traction.

11. Add a can of dry gas to the gas tank to prevent gas line freeze-ups.

12. Always carry a flashlight. Drive Carefully.

*Mrs. Douglas commuted to work 80 miles a day for 12 years and, with four big hills to contend with en route, missed only one day of work due to bad driving—a day the town snow plows broke down.*



Scott Currie

# Making It

## Scott Currie's Christian Ridge Pottery: a Studio in the Old Tradition

by Pat White Gorrie

The wheel turns; the lump of clay is slapped on it, patted, spanked, squeezed, pressed into a perfect ball, opened with a deft thumb movement and pulled up into a perfect cylinder—as swiftly as a magician lets a dove fly forth from an empty palm.

"Watch my hands! Don't look at the clay. Look at what my hands are doing! There's no magic here."

But you would swear there is. And from the opening moment of your pottery workshop in the basement of the Celebration Mime Company barn in South Paris, you find yourself hypnotized by Scott Currie's hands. His philosophy smacks of a gentle yogic awareness of the body as a tool of the mind, an inbred idealism, years of Connecticut Yankee training, and a taste for fine European-style craftsmanship.

But his deceptively fragile-looking, long-fingered hands are his dominant feature, at least to the mesmerized students, young or old, attending one of his mini "Pot Shot" courses (given free under a C.E.T.A. grant), or one of his more extensive two-or-three week workshops.

Scott's dream was to create a pottery studio in the authentic tradition of the 1800's, using locally-available clays and sand, and cobalt or feldspar for dashes of color in the glazes. Maine's plentiful wood supply would afford the main source of fuel, rather than gas, oil, or electricity.

Tony Montanaro, Celebration's director, got the dream off to its start by turning Scott loose to transform the huge basement under the rehearsal floor of Celebration's big red barn into the Christian Ridge Pottery Studio. The thumping and banging of Tony's mime students practicing cartwheels or "stage falls" were a constant backdrop to Scott's own bangings and thumpings as he, along with assistant Mary McKone and

Craig Bardorf, nailed up partitions and shelves, remortared and waterproofed old stone walls.

"It wasn't so much the creative atmosphere of this place that first inspired me, as it was that huge expanse of cement floor. You can't imagine how important that is to a potter. No steps to climb!"

The magnificent arched brick kilns which stand outside the basement studio under a long shed roof near the apple trees were designed by Scott, with the aid of his father, Thomas Currie (an industrial designer who also helped plan the studio and its equipment, including the large, heavily-mounted potter's wheels).

The kilns must be preheated for two days, requiring someone to tend the wood fires every three or four hours. Firing takes 24 hours and a pair of people must be present at all times to control the heat. It's no simple matter of flipping a switch to "On" and going home to bed. During a firing Scott and his crew develop a certain rhythm; with Scott exhibiting an uncanny instinct (born of experience) for exactly how much and what kind of wood to add at precise moments. He checks his choices by observing the smoke coming from the chimney and the glow inside the kiln.

Is a wood firing worth all this trouble and lack of sleep? Scott smiles at his chance to point out the fact that, "...Pottery fired with wood looks different from other pottery. I love it. The flame itself does the work, rather than hot gasses as with other types of firing, and so you get an effect that can be created in no other way. The flame and the ash flash when they hit a certain temperature, and form warm-toned, golden-brown glazes... burn marks, actually...as they merge with the clay and the sand. No two pieces of wood-fired pottery will ever be alike; they'll

## THE VALUE OF WOOD ASHES

As fertilizer, wood ashes often have an actual value in excess of their theoretical value, and they have an even greater value as a medicine for farm animals, and as a necessary part in soap making on the farm.

I keep wood ashes and charcoal mixed with salt constantly before my swine in a large covered box with holes two-by-six inches near the bottom. The hogs will work the mixture out through these holes as fast as they want it. I select ashes rich in charcoal, and mix three parts of ashes to one of salt. There is no danger of the swine eating too much of this mixture, or of pure salt, if...they are provided with water.

A little wood ashes, given to horses, is very beneficial....The only "condition powder" I have ever used has been clean wood ashes. The ashes may be given by putting an even teaspoonful in the oats twice a week. My experience is that the best condition powder is a mixture of three parts wood ashes to one of salt.

When used as a fertilizer, ashes not infrequently produce a greater increase of crop than their chemical components promised;...apparently the potash in the ashes increases the production of available plant food in the soil by inducing or stimulating chemical action. The great value of wood ashes for all leafy plants has long been recognized...and for clover, potatoes, corn, peas, beans, and many other crops.

The power of the potash in ashes to liberate nitrogen from humus is well known....Further, it has been shown that the application of wood ashes to the soil improves its capillarity, and therefore gives crops more moisture.

I have found wood ashes most valuable when applied to fruit crops. Their action is to increase the woody growth. Apparently wood ashes give the best results when applied to grapes and apples. They should be spaded in around the apple tree, and some distance from the trunk.

from *The American Agriculturist*  
December, 1892

have an irregularity that will be distinctive and very beautiful. The ware looks older, too, than it would by more modern methods."

"Wood firing doesn't require the technology that electrical firing does. It's a one-step operation. The wares dry naturally in the sun to the leather-hard stage, then are decorated with the hand-mixed glazes by brush or by 'slip-trailing.' They are fired only once: earthenware at 1750° and stoneware at 2380°."

Scott got interested in pottery after a brief stint as a newspaper advertising artist, which followed his graduation from Wagner College on Staten Island, New York. John LaSalla, a blacksmith in Scott's hometown of Westport, Connecticut, gave him an electric kiln and loaned him a potter's wheel. With this equipment on hand to play with any time of the day or night, Scott got hooked on pottery-making.

He spent a year in Breggins, Austria, on a student exchange program, where he lived in the home of Erna Aligeuer, a superb cook who exposed him not only to the olfactory joys of her *biernen* (pear bread) and *wiener-schnitzel*, but also to a level of culture that profoundly influenced his life.

While absorbing the German language, he also became increasingly aware of the extent and depth of European craftsmanship. That high standard is his guide today. He keeps going back, for the Old World inspires him in his quest for perfection.

Scott's first "Clay to Flame" workshop was held last summer. It opened with the ritual planting by each student of a dill seed in a little peat pot—one that would, we hoped, be encased in a hand-wrought ceramic one before the two weeks were up. Then, everyone piled into trucks and we were off to the Morin Brick Works in Danville to dig virgin blue clay (3000 pounds of it).

Mornings after that began at 8:30 with gentle, limbering, stretching, muscle-strengthening hatha yoga sessions taught by Claire Sikoryak, one of Tony's mime company regulars. A South Paris chiropractor, Barry Mendelson, visited and lectured and suggested additional exercises and slant boards to counteract the strain of working intensely over a wheel or wedging table for hours on end. Potters have a history of back trouble. Clay is heavy; pushing, pulling, kneading and lifting it can raise havoc with the spine. Scott didn't want

anyone leaving at the end of the day feeling sore or crippled...just tired!

"Think of the Japanese! They're among the finest potters in the world and they're tiny...but they know how to use their bodies!"

Throughout the day he'd check on you, not just on what your hands were doing with the clay, but how you were using your body.

"Tuck in those elbows...sit closer to the wheel...you don't have to be big and athletic to throw a pot...let the clay know who's boss...but RESPECT it...don't rush it! Think of it as—water...give it time to flow...to change shape..."

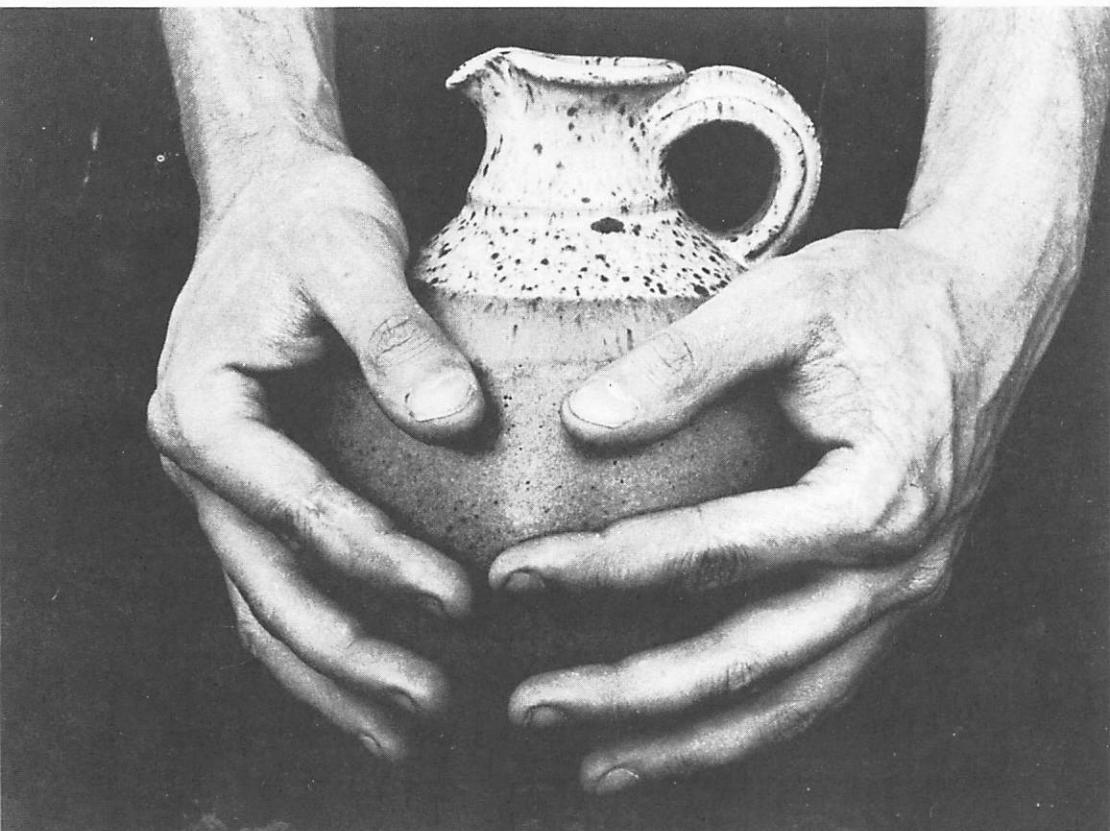
He speaks with awe and wonder of the design of the human hand. Never again will you take four fingers and an opposing thumb for granted.

"Look at it! There's no other instrument in the world that can compare with it. And your mind controls what it does!"

If the words that tumble out of Scott's

mouth sound metaphysical, their end result is nevertheless a practical one, for Christian Ridge Pottery will produce a wide variety of useful items made with lead-free glazes, ranging from nested mixing bowls (which he calls "kraters"), to teapots, sugar bowls, and cactus planters. Tile making is one of his joys; he has made wall-sized murals with tiles fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle. In the afternoon or evening classes, children and grown-ups alike are encouraged to let their whimsy take over; the clay they work is transformed into everything from scary masks which will hang on a wall to whistles shaped like beasts or birds which will really whistle.

Pottery has existed since the first cave man picked up a piece of clay, rolled it in his hands and tossed it into the fire. Scott Currie's studio is a place where this ancient, elemental art can be fanned into glowing life again and again. ■



# Heading Out

GOIN' SMELTIN'



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A WINTER FISHING VILLAGE.



The catching of the small fish known as the smelt is a very important industry in some parts of Maine during the winter season. These fish, which range in length from four or five to eleven inches, come up into the rivers in immense quantities when the weather becomes cold, seeking the headwaters, or the lakes that feed the rivers, as spawning ground. They were formerly caught in great quantities in weirs, but are now caught almost wholly with hook and line, or more correctly with hooks and line, since one line may have a number of hooks attached. In the spring, when these fish are passing down the rivers again to the sea, they are taken, to a limited extent, in dip nets at night. It is a very interesting sight to see these fishermen standing on some projecting point, rock or log, "sweeping the lazy brine" with their long-handled nets, while the picturesque shores are lighted up by frequent bonfires.

As soon as the ice begins to make along the shores and shallow spots in the late fall or early winter, the small white houses begin to migrate riverward, borne on wagons, "for'ard" wheels, or sleds, according to the condition of the traveling. These little frame houses are usually made of inch framing and covered with cotton cloth, and this is sometimes oiled to make it waterproof. They vary in size, but rarely have a width or length of more than five or six feet. They are made without floors, the surface of the ice serving for this purpose instead of boards. A tiny stove occupies one side or corner which, with an old soap box for the fisherman to sit on, constitutes the sole furniture.

A long slit is cut in the ice within each of these houses and above it is placed, lengthwise, a pole supported either by the framing at the side of the house or by crotched sticks inserted in the ice at the ends of the slit. From this pole are suspended a

half-dozen or more lines and, when the fish are biting well, a man has to work rapidly to keep his lines clear. Fifty or more pounds are sometimes caught in one of these little houses in a day. Each night the day's catch is packed in boxes and allowed to freeze, and is then shipped to Boston or New York to be sold by commission merchants.

The flavor of these Northern smelts is vastly superior to those taken in lower latitudes, and this creates a lively demand for all that can be taken during the season. The price is the markets usually opens at ten cents per pound, but soon falls to six cents, which represents, probably, the average price received when the fish are shipped away. ■



A YOUNG FISHERMAN.

*\*Reprinted from  
the January, 1892 issue  
of The American Agriculturist*

*"Go With Gerry"*

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**a poem of winter**

soft beneath meadow soft  
snow of finest linen  
mice tunnel/seek & seed  
broken sun and sky pieces  
the earth twitched alive  
along hay-down runs  
escapes the fox  
the 3 headed hound

Winslow Durgin  
Minot

**YOU DON'T SAY**

My grandson John, eight, and his cousin Peter, nine, had received Episcopal and Roman Catholic instruction, respectively. To settle a moot point of ethics, they appealed to my wife.

"Grandmother," asked John, "what does my teacher mean when she says that all men are brothers? How can they be brothers if they don't have the same mother and father?"

"It means, John, that all men should love each other like brothers, for all are children of God and in that sense are brothers of each other."

"But does it mean everybody? Are the Jews our brothers?"

"Of course, John. Don't you remember that Jesus Christ was born a Jew?"

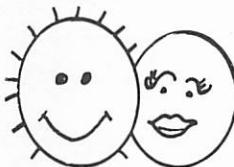
"Yes, he was," interrupted Peter, "but he turned Catholic."

John E. Hankins  
Oxford

**A MARINER'S PRAYER**

No one lives forever  
Though love is a stout defense  
And so man, if he can, must endeavor  
To shape his circumstance  
As sailors know  
Who weather gales  
By heading up,  
And short'nig sails.

Austin West  
Bridgton



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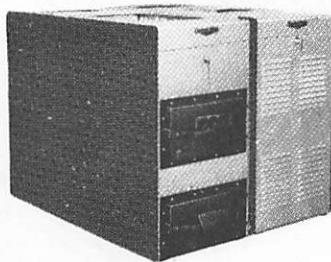
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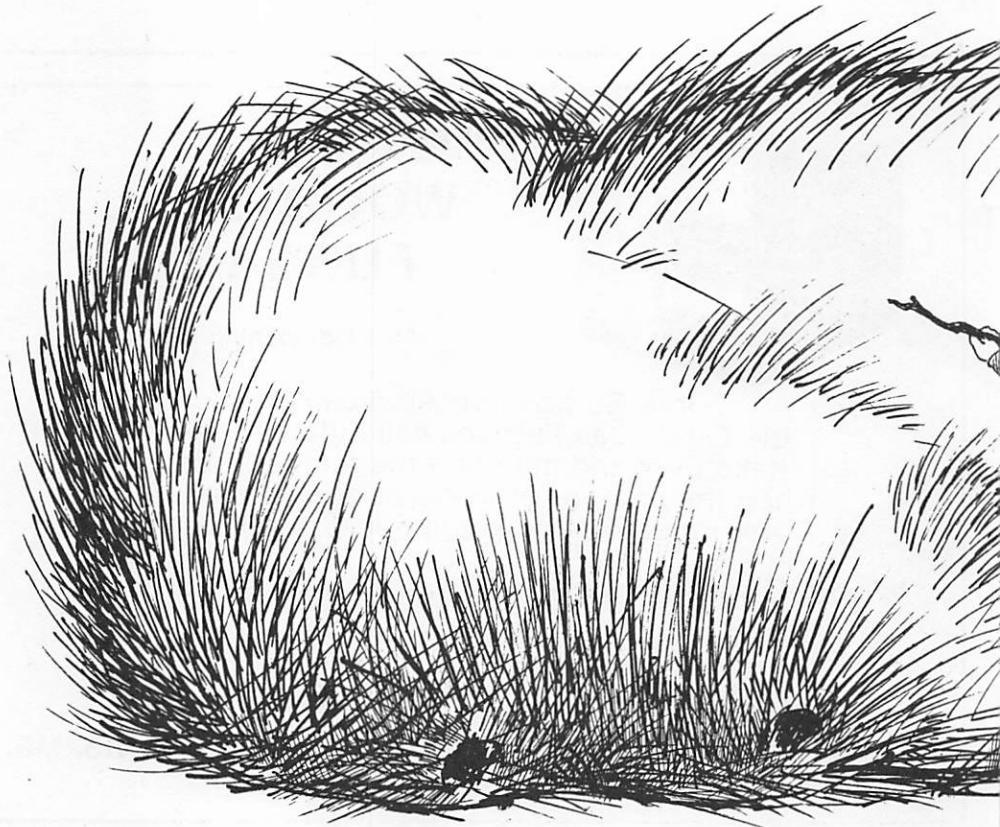
CHARLES STREET, SOUTH PARIS, ME.

## THE COONSKIN CAP

We were living in the Yagger Neighborhood in those days and, although I was quite young at the time, I still hold many fond memories of that little country hamlet. Yagger is the name given to a small settlement built on the road that runs the back side of Jim Hill Mountain in Norway, Maine. I have no idea where the name came from and I have never run across that name anywhere else either.

At that time there were only five Tuckers: father, mother, my younger brother Steven, my baby brother Mark, and myself. Our home was a small four-room house that in earlier years had served as the Yagger Neighborhood School. It was the first house that my folks ever owned.

It was about 1958. I was six and Steve was four and, like many young boys across the country at that time, our hopes, desires,



## by Ben Tucker III

thoughts and actions were directed towards one goal—to become miniature Davy Crocketts. Walt Disney's movie hero had captured the hearts of thousands of youthful fans and the Davy Crockett craze that was spreading the country in those days had gripped our young hearts with a passion.

I was two years older than Steve and naturally the most like our legendary hero, a fact I never let my poor brother forget. I was

tall like Davy; at least, taller than Steve. I could speak sign language too, even though no one could understand it. Why, I had heard my Grandmother Allen remark one day that a relative of ours was named Crockett and I was sure that we were probably related to Ol' Davy himself. Most likely all of Davy's traits had passed from generation to generation and at last had appeared again in the flesh. Here I was, the "King of the Wild



Frontier," reincarnate.

I shot "bars," Steve was the bars. I fought "Injuns;" Steve was the Injuns. I rode horses bareback; Steve was the horses. To put it mildly, I had become an overnight hero myself (with a little help from Steve). Still, however, there was something missing. I lacked the one real essential to complete the Crockett image. I didn't have a coonskin cap.

For a while this did not bother much and with a pan, a striped sock and a little imagination, I fashioned a makeshift cap. It sufficed for a time but the tail stuck out straight instead of hanging properly and needless to say, the fit was less than perfect. I became convinced that no self-respecting hero would wear such a thing and the more I thought about it, the more I became certain that I must have a genuine coonskin cap.

I turned my nose up at the imitation coonskin caps on sale at the department store in Norway. Davy would never wear imitation coon and neither would I. I hunted coons in the fields out back but I never saw any. Once, out of desperation, I stalked a chipmunk for two hours, to no avail. The chipmunk was no help at all. He acted quite unconcerned about the whole matter. If only he knew that young Davy Crockett was watching his comings and goings.

A coonskin cap became my only want. I daydreamed about it. I dreamed about it at night too. Every time I looked in the mirror I imagined myself in buckskins and cap as I set out to discover new wilderness territories. Finally, one day in August, my dreams almost came true.

It was hot, not unseasonably so, but hot just the same, and the air was thick with moisture. Steve and I were patiently stalking "buffalo" out in the back pasture. Just as we were getting closer to our quarry, my mother's voice split the quiet "prairie" air.

"Boys!" she hollered.

We left the hunt and returned home to see what was up.

"Would you boys walk down to Emerson's and get me two quarts of milk?" she asked. "I need a pint of cream too."

"Can we stay and play for a while?" we asked.

"Not today," she said. "I'm making pudding and I need the milk."

"Why don't you ask the girls to come up here and play?" she added.

The Emersons were a farm family down the road where we were accustomed to get

our milk, cream, and butter, and the Emerson girls were the only children our age in the neighborhood. We were always glad to get milk there for mother and the responsibility was eagerly accepted.

As we headed down over the hill to the farm, Steve and I got into an argument. Steve was sick and tired of being the bad guy all the time and he wanted a chance to be Davy Crockett once in a while himself. It was not an altogether unreasonable request but Steve just did not seem the hero type to me and I told him so. I mean he was just too little and too chubby and there was only room for one Davy Crockett at the time.

Our argument ended abruptly however when we approached the Emerson's driveway. Something in the ditch by the side of the road caught my eye and I stopped short. There, laying on its side, was a dead raccoon. My coonskin cap! My genuine coonskin cap! There it was right in front of me!

In an instant all thoughts of milk, cream, playing, and responsibility were lost. Steve and I became so enthralled by this prize specimen that we didn't even notice Farmer Emerson as he approached from the barn.

"Hello," he said good-naturedly. "How you boys today?"

"Good," I managed to say.

"Say, is this your coon?" Steve asked.

"Well, I can't rightly say that he's mine, but I'm the one that shot him. Shot him last night when he was raiding my corn," the farmer answered.

"Boy, he's a big one," I said. "Look at that beautiful tail!" All the time I was wondering how to get my hands on that beautiful animal so I could have my precious cap.

"How much do you want for him?" I ventured, trying hard to use a manly-sounding voice.

"Want for him? Why? What do you boys want with a dead coon?" Emerson chuckled.

"I'm going to make a coonskin cap outta him and be just like Davy Crockett," I said proudly.

"Oh, a coonskin cap..." he said slowly. As I look back, I seem to remember a slight twinkle in the farmer's eyes.

"He would make a nice cap, at that," he said. "If you two fellas can drag this coon home, you can have him."

"Really?" I shouted. It seemed too good to be true.

"Oh boy," Steve exclaimed. "Won't Dad be



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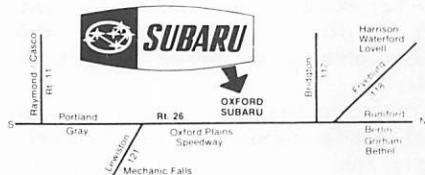
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surprised when he sees this."

"Yes, I dare say he will," Emerson chuckled and went off to the barn.

What luck! I was so excited I did not know what to do. Steve, being a bit more level-headed than I, suggested we proceed post-haste before Farmer Emerson decided to change his mind. Now let me tell you that a fat coon, gorged with corn, and a deadweight besides, is quite an uphill load for two boys ages four and six.

We were excited though, and full of the pioneer spirit; two heroes from the Tennessee backcountry headed home with our prize.

The road from the farm to our house was dirt and mostly upgrade, but our Crockett ingenuity told us that the best way to proceed was to grab a hind leg and pull. The load proved heavier than we thought and dragging was very difficult. After a short haul we stopped to catch our breath and survey the situation. When we started up again, we each got a hold on the ringed tail, but this method proved to be more difficult than the hind feet. Not only that, but it seemed a bit chancy to pull on the most valuable part of my coonskin cap, so we stopped again.

Our grunts and groans had gotten us only a small way up the road. We tried to roll the fat old coon a ways, but this appeared to be the least efficient method of transport yet. We stopped again and this time we sat down in the ditch to rest and think. Our spirit had waned a little and the task before us seemed much harder than before.

## OLD HOUSES

Old houses have the mystery  
Of other ages' joys,  
The mingling scent  
Of rose hips and  
Lilacs marking time,  
The furnishings worn comforting  
By friendship's interchange,  
And whiteness blending easily  
With winter's chaff disdain.  
The future takes them over  
And borrows of the best  
In hope that at  
Some distant date  
It too will still be left.

• Larry Billings  
Bryant Pond

We were about opposite the Delano Place, a small, self-sufficient farm just up the road from the Emersons. Floretta Delano, the kindly wife of Farmer Delano, had evidently watched our labors from her kitchen window. She must have decided that help was needed because when we sat down, she came out of the house to see what was up.

"Hi, boys," she said, "Where did you get that coon?" I noticed a big smile on her face.

"Oh, Mr. Emerson gave him to us," I replied. "We're taking him home to make a real coonskin cap just like Davy Crockett's."

"He's awful heavy," Steve added.

"Yes, he does look heavy," she agreed. "Wait a minute and I think I can help you boys out."

With that, Mrs. Delano disappeared into her barn. In a moment she returned and she was carrying a short alder pole and two lengths of bailing twine. She proceeded to tie a length of the twine to each hind foot and in the other end of the piece she fashioned a small loop through which the alder pole was placed.

"Now boys," she remarked, "each one of you grab a side of this pole and drag evenly and I think you should find the going much easier." We gave it a practice run and indeed it was much easier. We were able to stand fully upright and use both hands as well.

"Thank you," we both exclaimed to the kindly lady.

"That's all right," she laughed. "Bring your cap down when it's finished. I'd like to see it."

How big and proud we felt. The going was quite easy now and we hurried home to show our trophy to mother. I imagined that I was Davy himself returning home after a big hunt and I knew that the "womenfolk" would be pleased with my efforts.

Though our elation was great, it was short-lived. Mother was working in her flower garden and she had observed our approach down the road. When we reached the driveway, she hurried over and stared disgustedly down at our prize.

"Where in the name of heaven did you get that nasty thing?" she snapped before either of us had a chance to say a word.

"Nasty?" I asked indignantly. "Mr. Emerson gave him to us and we are going to make a coonskin cap out of him."

"Not nasty?" she said. "What is that smell, then? And look at those maggots!"

This threw my treasure into a new light. I had not noticed it previously but there was

an odor arising from that coon and it was, in fact, rather putrid. Closer inspection turned up a few maggots about the coon's face and around the bullet hole in his side.

"Where is the milk and cream you went after anyway?" Mother asked. She was quite perturbed by the whole state of affairs.

Milk? Cream? Suddenly I remembered the original intent of our walk.

"Yeah, but wait 'til Dad sees this coon," broke in Steve. "He'll like him."

"When your father does see this rotten coon, he's going to be some mad," Mother snapped. "He'll have to take him down back and bury him before it stinks the whole place up."

"But Mom," I pleaded, "Can't we make a cap out of the coon?"

"No," she said. "That coon has been dead too long. The skin is all barked up and he is rotting. You couldn't have a cap made even if we could afford it."

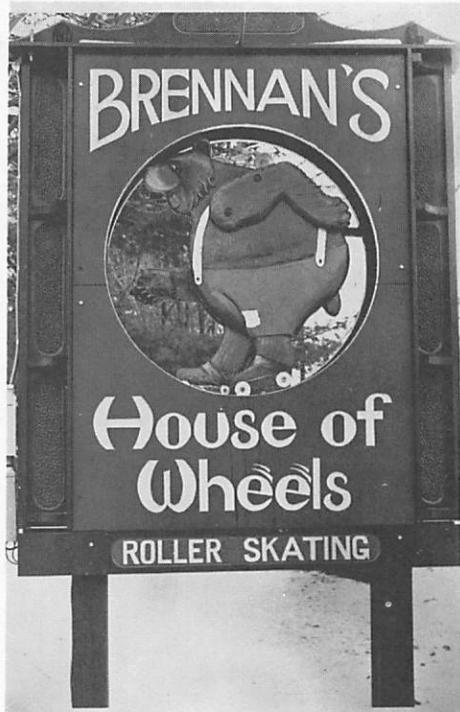
Alas, the heartbreaks of youth. Killed again by the practicalities of the adult world.

That evening when Dad got home he listened as Mother and Steve told him the whole story. I stayed in my room and waited for him to get angry, but he said little and I suspect he remembered boyish ways from his own childhood.

That night as the sun was setting, I stood in my bedroom window and watched father, with wheelbarrow in hand, head down across the field to the Big Pine Woods to lay to rest the dead coon and with it my hopes of a coonskin cap. For a time I was overcome with great sadness. But, the hearts of boys are strong and in a while Davy Crockett, fringed shoes, and coonskin caps were all but forgotten in the adventurous days of my Maine boyhood. ■

Ben Tucker III, a student of local history and a regular contributor to **BitterSweet**, now resides in Oxford with his wife and young son.

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# Medicine For The Hills



by Michael A. Lacombe, M.D.



## New Year's Resolution

The men stir, glance at one another, and head for the back room, reaching for their breast pockets. A wake is a heavy affair, even when the deceased is eighty years old, and a man needs a break from the grieving. In the back, the smoking room is well-appointed, the funeral home's oasis. Ornate ashtrays sentry each well-stuffed chair. The blue-grey haze and smell of tobacco attest to a way of life.

The men light up, take long, slow drags, and begin to relax. United for a day in this grief, they join together as well in this ritual of manhood. Faces soften, brows smooth, and someone breaks the silence with a reminiscence. Family reunions of another order are summoned up. As the spark of recollection touches each man, they live again the good old days, those holidays and special times of years ago. Fathers and sons, uncles and cousins, each has his special indelible moment to tell.

In those days, we'd stamp off the snow, run inside the warmth of his home, waist-high to everybody. Dodging hugs and wet kisses, we'd settle in the living room and begin building houses and roads from his scores of cigarette packages. And we'd watch the men, and tuck away gestures, laughs, and phrases for use later on. The women clattered the dishes and each man, holding beer and cigarette in one hand as only a man can do, laughed and teased one another. He'd yell "Tidbits!" and we'd stow the packs and run for the carving. Cigarette dangling, left eye squinting against the smoke, he'd pass out bits of warm turkey and skin to his "little chickens." And that part of each of us busy with the lessons of manhood studied the moves.

At dinner the schooling continued. While uncles rolled their eyes and aunts were politely quiet, we learned about doing things well and loving our family and how to raise the best turkeys and how not to smoke until we were 21. Each boy stored it away.

Table cleared, the women gossiped in the kitchen as the men sat down to poker. We watched, fascinated, from the living room, and tried to imitate. He always seemed to win (and reminded them of that), and Art always lost, and they all continually nursed their lighted cigarettes.

As the years passed and acquisition became unimportant and retirement a reality, he gained time. But time for him was less than it might have been. They called it old age, but the pursed lips, barrel chest and slow, measured steps spoke of something else. No wind, he had said, and surrendered his garden, his roses, and his birds. Deprived of air, he gave up driving, then long walks in the fall, then even going out of doors. The vigorous, tattooed ex-sailor became a shut-in. He had had more than his three-score-and-ten, but he had lost his golden years. And he had left, unwittingly, a legacy. His grandsons, every one, learned to smoke.

My cousin, seventeen and confused with all this death and sadness, snubs his third cigarette and leaves to be with his mother. The rest, suddenly awakened from the reverie, hastily take a long last drag and follow. Great-Uncle Henry, brother of the deceased, looking more like sixty than his eighty years, is a haunting example of what could have been for his brother. He rushes about, greeting and comforting everyone, marvelling at how we've grown. And he has the wind to do it. He has never smoked. Yet no one there makes the connection; no one sees himself in the casket.

In the barrage of today's anti-smoking propaganda, two very simple lessons are often lost. We forget how dear to us our health is until we lose it, and how precious the quality of life. We fail to realize the power of our actions, actions watched carefully by the children around us, for whom words alone are not enough.

This New Year, make a different resolution. Consider your children. Don't smoke in front of them.

*Dr. Lacombe, a member of the Oxford Hills Internal Medicine Group, serves on the Stephens Memorial Hospital Health Education Project Advisory Board.*

#### NOVEMBER'S HENNERY "PLACE"

Mrs. Alice S. Denison recently brought us the identification of November's **Can You Place It?** The event was the 1928 Harrison Old Home Days Parade. The people, left to right, were: (standing) Miss Perkins, Mrs. Alice Denison; (seated) Mrs. Margaret Denison, her daughter Carol Denison (Libby), Miss Perkins holding baby Jack Denison (Alice's son). Driver was Stanley Whitney.

#### WINTER SONNET

I journeyed down a snow-filled road to find  
Our cabin snug in winter coat of white.  
My feet made prints of such a different kind;  
In summer steps are bare and wet and light.  
The scent of pine and fir was sharp and sweet;  
The lake iced flat, then topped with  
crystal snow.

Blue mountains darkened black  
to sharply meet  
The twilight sky with winter's sunset glow.  
In summer shouts of swimmers fill the air  
And sunlight filters golden through  
green lace;

How different to see branches black and bare  
And hear no warbler's song about the place.  
I softly whispered, "Little camp, hello,"  
Then turned about reluctantly to go.

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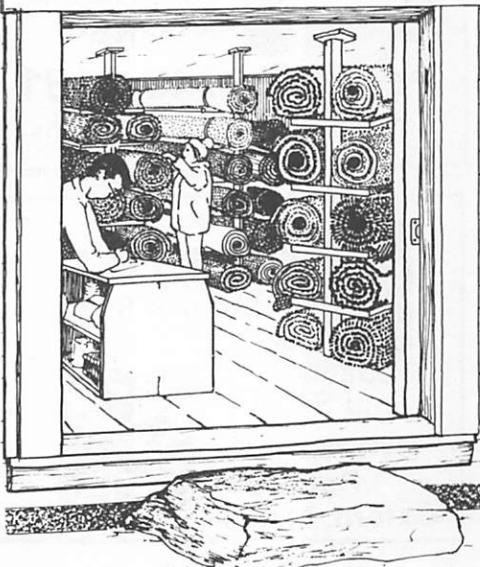
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her best at it.

I hope I can meet her just as she was—not as some pretty, young angel I would not know. While her mind and body grew aged, her spirit and heart remained young. So age only added sweetness and knowledge to her charms. I hope too that in Heaven babies can be rocked to sleep. To Gram there would be something lacking with no fluffy pink or blue blankets hanging over a crib and no babies to rock. Regardless of rules I allowed her to rock mine and I can see her in memory now, rocking one until they both fell asleep, white hair and blonde, old age and youth. Gram would jump suddenly, look around and say, "Guess I must have dropped off for a minute." My children never had to be taught to respect old age, for they learned to love it.

So I hope somewhere Gram is rocking a sleepy baby in the warm sunshine, like a Maine June day. I hope the sunshine sparkles on gold and diamond earrings, for she loved them and it will not matter to her if she has a crown or not as long as she has pretty earrings. I hope that she knows her two grandsons came home safely from the war, for she died without knowing.

Mondays in January are days of endurance and courage, if you are the old-fashioned kind who thinks you must wash on Monday regardless of floods, winds, and cold weather. If you have to hang the wash outdoors and if you have no glassed-in porch, you get a system that really works, as I have done. First, I wait for a warm day, which does not come, while all the clothes are getting sadly in need of washing. The day comes when I have to do it, so I sort them all over, thinking I will do only the ones most needed. I find I need them all except a worn out towel and Doc's greasy overalls which I always put off washing as long as possible. I have found that on a cold, windy day ten articles are my limit to get on the line at one time. These have a way, especially if they are sheets, of persistently wrapping freezing arms around me. When they are on the line I run, not walk, to the house. I take off coat, scarf, overshoes, and gloves, and get ten more pieces ready to go out. I put on coat, scarf, overshoes and gloves and go out—to find the first ten pieces scattered over the yard and out in the deep snow. I can usually find eight pieces and take them in, frozen as solid as planks, to dry in the living room. We

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live in a forest of wet clothes for two days, but I find this plan about the only one to use and it can be depended on never to fail!

The saying that everyone talks about the weather but no one does anything about it, does not apply to January in Maine. We have to do something about it constantly. It is a continuous struggle with the elements to keep warm and comfortable. Furnaces and oil burners do much to keep our homes warm but the icy chill will creep in, especially if there is a wind. If the fires happen to go out on a zero night, you will wake up chilled to the bone to hear water pipes snapping. Then you have to do something about the weather; you have to fight it every step of the way back to warm rooms and thawed-out pipes. Put on your heavy bathrobe over your clothes, your husband's felt boots over your shoes, and get to work. By bedtime, the house is warm again, and you go to sleep wondering if you will have to do it all over again tomorrow morning. Maine winters favor no one. The wealthy man is just as cold as the poor one if the fires decide to go out in the night or if the oil burner goes on strike. Your neighbor's Packard starts just as hard on a cold morning as your Model A Ford.

We do not think of these things as hardships—they are just a part of living, and Maine gives everyone a "heap of living." Each small town and each house has its own stories of sorrow, happiness, and tragedy. A few scattered homes make up a town that goes on to make up a nation. Our little town had the sad honor of having more gold stars in its service flag than any other town of its population in the state. As in all things we did our part in the war; not much perhaps as wars are counted, but five of our boys gave their life for their country. Boys we watched

grow up and whom we loved and whose deaths were a personal sorrow to each one in town. Boys who will never skate on the lake again or drive through the village on a cold night and see the smoke rolling up from every chimney, never take a girl friend to the movies. Boys who died far from Maine but who will live in the hearts of all small towns forever.

As I look in my diary at by-gone Januaries, I notice often where it mentions "16 inches of snow last night," "got a foot of snow," "wind drifting snow badly." As I try to remember what each one of these meant to us, I find they meant just nothing at all. I cannot distinguish one storm from another in my memory. We read of cities being paralyzed by a snowstorm but there is nothing paralyzing about one in Maine, except to your back. We have splendid snow removal equipment and contrary to many states our plows go out during the storm, not waiting until it is over. We wake up to a beautiful sight, every tree and bush loaded with snow and one main road open and waiting for us to shovel a road to meet it. Many towns plow out the yards so chains are scarcely ever needed on cars. The cars with chains on them parked along Main Street in large towns and cities will wear an out-of-state license with the mistaken idea that a car cannot get to Maine without chains, shovels, and bags of sand.

It is sometimes hard to find the beauty in nature through the month of January, but it is a month sure to teach one many things. It has taught me several trades that may come in handy some day. From thawing out the frozen sink drain I have learned to be a good plumber. I could get a job as a fireman any time; and I can start a car on a cold morning if anyone can. I have learned where to pour the hot water on the manifold, to be careful not to "flood" it—and I even know some of the words it is customary to say!

There are only two ways to avoid the discomforts of January: to den up like the bears and ground hogs or to go to Florida. As I think these over I do not care much for either idea. I certainly am not going to den up and miss everything. I would have to miss the winter carnivals, the snow queen balls, and my annual trip through the Notches of New Hampshire. And why should I leave Maine for Florida—a state that holds only a few of my friends, where there are no familiar streets, no memories, no past or



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future for men, and not nearly as many exciting things to do?

Some way we meet each problem of winter and come through it comfortably and happy. We are like the old lady who said she liked to get in a tight place just to see if she was going to get out of it. We have had our usual winter worries; fear that someone will get sick during a bad storm, or that the house will catch on fire on a night when it is far below zero, and my usual insomnia at night while I smell imaginary smoke. The family is never quite free from colds and the sniffles. When you are not wiping your own nose, you are always telling the children to "use your handkerchief, for mercy's sake."

The month has brought the pleasure that can be found in simple things: sitting up late on a cold night to keep the house warm; eating bushels of popcorn and potato chips, while a spelling bee goes on with words selected from the dictionary; the struggle to name the capitals of the forty-eight states and getting stuck on Alabama; then once we get the capitals, going on in a contest to spell them. I cannot picture an evening spent in Florida with a popcorn fire, then playing beano around the table and, as the game gets exciting, eating the beans instead of popcorn!

Evenings pass quickly and no one notices how fast the thermometer drops. It does not worry us much anyway, for extra blankets are already on the bed and each one has a hot water bottle waiting. To be sure, the pretty picture is marred by mittens, snow suits, and overshoes drying under and around the kitchen stove; but the men and children will start to work and to school tomorrow with dry warm clothes.

As I discover the capital of Alabama, I discover too that life is just about as you make it. To be sure, we sometimes go to bed so stuffed with spelling and popcorn that we have nightmares, but we do not know loneliness or discontent. And another day in January is gone.

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Inez Farrington now resides at the Ledgeview Nursing Home in West Paris, where she continues to write every day, despite less-than-perfect health. She has had works published in **Redbook**, **Ford Times**, and has published several books of poetry.

It is with her enthusiastic permission that **Maine Is Forever** appears in **BitterSweet** and we are grateful.

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# Ayah

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and suggestions an important means of discovering our readers' interests. Representative and appropriate letters will be published as space allows. Most likely answers won't be necessary, and probably the only response you'll receive will be a most appropriate "Ayah!"

## FOND MEMORIES

What fond memories were brought back to me by Ben Tucker's story of his grandfather and fox hunting! I, too, was a fox hunter, and had the privilege and pleasure of knowing and hunting with some real old-time hunters.

I was born and lived in Oxford for most of my 70 years and hunted with such good men as Joe Robinson, Altie Grover, Harry Pulsifer, "Stub" Fuller, my older brother Philip Dunn, to name a few. Joe Robinson, the owner of the Manufacturing Company that bears his name, always kept fox hounds, and was an astute student of the ways of the sly reynard, as well as the ways of hounds on a scent.

One pair of hounds I remember well were Joe's Bob and Topsy, and when they gave tongue on a cold trail on a frosty October morning, one tended to forget such things as cold hands or feet, and listened for the quickening music when the fox was routed from his bed. Never below tenor in pitch, their voices were a perfect match, and what delight it was to hear them quicken their music as the scent got warmer. And when the fox was on his feet, you'd say to yourself, "I wouldn't be anywhere else in the world, nor swap places with any living person." I have known many good hounds in a long lifetime, but this pair will always be tops in my memories.

Other good, bold hounds I have known were Harry Pulsifer's old Lead and Stub Fuller's Gyp, father and daughter—both honest fox hounds that wouldn't look at any other game. I was privileged one morning to watch Gyp carry a fox scent across a field where three deer were feeding. They scattered when the dog was nearly in their midst, but they might as well have been trees for all the attention they got from Gyp. In a few minutes, her voice quickened and Mr. Fox was on his feet and running.

Other old hunters I have known were Joe Davis, Sam Ellsworth, Bill Lombard, and Henry Chaplin. One morning in November of 1918 (before I became a fox-hunter), the hounds were running a fox on Lovell's Hill in Otisfield. About mid-morning the fox fell to Bill Lombard's gun, and the group was gathered around discussing the hunt.

Suddenly, the whistles began to blow and the bells to ring in neighboring towns to signify the end of the war in Europe, and someone said, "What's that for?" Henry spoke up and said, "They're celebrating because Bill has finally shot a fox!"

Many men have followed hounds through the years. I knew and admired Fred Streever, an ardent fox hound man, one-time dog editor for the old National Sportsman. His kennels always contained some top-notch fox dogs.

George Washington, too, was a fox hunter, except for the years from 1776 to 1783, when more pressing matters occupied his time. And Will Shakespeare knew something of the joys of the chase as he expressed it in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

"My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flewed, so sanded, and their heads

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are hung With ears that sweep away the morning dew. Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bills each unto each—A cry more tuneable was never hallooed to, nor cheered with horn."

The old days of fox hunting are gone—too many automobiles and good roads for the safety of the dogs, for when a hound had fox scent in his nose, he never knew or cared for anything else. The old days are gone, but I still have some beautiful memories.

Hollis Dunn  
Fort Myers, Florida

## FOREVER

Congratulations! **BitterSweet** is the Very Best and it really expresses the people of our community.

I have every issue and will keep them forever.

Freeman Smith  
Norway

## STIRRED MEMORIES

One of my erstwhile Oxford County neighbors sent me a copy of **BitterSweet** and, even though I have vowed never to set foot north of the Mason-Dixon line between October and May, I got downright homesick. I read every inch of the magazine including the masthead and the classified ads.

Not surprising, since I haven't lived in those parts for over 30 years, there are places mentioned I've never heard of. Oxford (the town), for instance. I remember Oxford Plains as a long stretch of road through piney woods. It was the only place you could pass a car between Norway and Welchville.

In the late 1930's, perhaps 40's, my mother (Mrs. John Franklin Martin) and I were driving home from the coast. Heavy smoke blanketed the entire length of the Plains and later we found out that we were one of the last cars permitted to pass across before the forest fire engulfed the entire area. We drove on to find a good deal of the village of Hanover going up in smoke, too.

Congratulations on your nifty magazine. My subscription is enclosed.

Eleanor Summers  
Charlotte, North Carolina

## COLD CROSSING

The picture of the car on the ferry crossing the Androscoggin River (*Sept. issue, Can You Place It?*) was the ferry between East Bethel and Hanover. This ferry never had a motor on it, but was carried across by the power of the river current against the cables that guided the boat from landing to landing. The road is now practically non-existent on the East Bethel side and completely non-existent on the Hanover side.

At one time there were four ferries across the Androscoggin River—one near the so-called Charles Bartlett farm, the next between east Bethel and Hanover, the next between Rumford Corner and Rumford Point which is the site of a bridge at this time, and the fourth one between the schoolhouse in South Rumford and Rumford Center. Both of these two ferries in Rumford were powered by gasoline engines and the river current. In the winter-time, people crossed on the ice either by foot or with vehicles.

Jack Farren operated the ferry between Rumford Corner and Rumford Point for many years and his son Lloyd was always the first to cross the river on the ice with a vehicle. Some years it was a rather wet and cold crossing, but it never surprised anyone when we heard that Lloyd crossed the river in his truck and went through the ice. That was a common occurrence.

G. E. Whitman  
South Paris

## REO RHYME

I enclose herewith an original poem which I wrote a couple of years ago.

I think that a word of explanation is in order. "Mrs. Whittemore" was really Mrs. Drake. She was born a Whittemore before marriage and she lived on the old Buckfield road from Paris Hill. It was, and is, a very nice house in the "Whittemore District" now owned and occupied by Mr. Joel Foster I believe.

"The Cape" when I was young on Paris Hill was South Paris. I have always wondered WHY and Seward Stearns recently said that he thought it was because the river makes a semi-circle around the Village, making a "cape." It does not seem like a very good explanation to me, but be that as it may—years ago South Paris was "The Cape," as older people in town will remember.

I enjoy your magazine. You are doing a fine job and I wish you well.



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My father George M. Atwood published the Oxford Democrat for many years before it was consolidated with the Norway Advertiser to form the Advertiser-Democrat. For about seventy-five years, before the paper was moved down to "The Cape," it was printed in the building that I occupy as a summer residence on Paris Hill.

Raymond L. Atwood  
Jacksonville, Florida

### MRS. WHITTEMORE'S RED REO

When I was ten years old, or so

In a small Maine town, long years ago,  
One of the things I remember best

That seems to stand above the rest  
Is Mrs. Whittemore's automobile.

Of all good things, the most ideal.  
A beautiful Roan, Red, Reo car

With brass that shone like a twinkling star.  
That went Ka-Chug, Ka-Chug, Ka-Chug

As first one cylinder, then the other  
FIRED—and waited for its brother

And the "whip-snap" of the driving chain  
Added its note to the sweet refrain.

Alone, in front, sat her hired man, John

Who hoed the garden and mowed her lawn  
And shined the brass on the roan, red REO  
And drove the car—my boyhood hero!

To give the scene an added luster—  
His gauntlet gloves and linen duster

Protect against the mighty power  
And speed of fifteen-miles-an-hour.

Calm and serene on the back seat sat  
Mrs. Whittemore with her hat

Tied with a veil, and a knitted shawl,  
And topped with a white, fringed parasol.

Down the dusty road they'd go  
In the beautiful shiny red Reo,

Each Tuesday morn, at half-past ten,  
Down to "The Cape" and back again,  
To sell her eggs at the grocery store,  
And buy supplies for a week or more.

Oh! The dreams of a boy are long and sweet—  
If EVER I could have that seat

With goggles and duster, behind the wheel  
Of that beautiful Reo automobile

That went Ka-Chug, Ka-Chug, Ka-Chug,  
With its greasy chain and its sparking plug!

When Heaven bestows its gifts galore  
Just let ME drive Mrs. Whittemore

Down the golden streets on the  
Heavenly shore

And I'll not ask for anything more.



## Can You Place It?

Beatrice, "B" Wyman, a retired schoolteacher and postal worker called us from Harrison with an identification of last month's **Can You Place It?** of the oxen team pulling a load of logs. The house at the left behind the team is her house on Main Street in Harrison; beyond that is the Pitts house and Lakeside Grange Hall. She tells us that the picture must be at least fifty years old because the roads were rolled and not plowed, and she believes her house was owned by Frank Whitney at that time. The identification of the team's driver is not positive. It could be Elmer Thomas, Jim Thomas, Walter Mains or Roscoe Whitney, all of whom drove teams in those days.

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# Goings On

## MUSIC

THIRD ANNUAL PRESENTATION OF DOWN-HOME HARMONY: by the Norway-Paris Chapter of the Society for Preservation & Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America; Feb. 3, 8 p.m., Oxford Hills High School Auditorium; Featuring Hillsmen Chorus & Visiting Quartets.

## ART

INDONESIAN TEXTILES: Exhibit through Jan. 6, Hebron Academy's Hupper Gallery. Gallery hr. 9 - 3 weekdays; 12 - 5 Sun.

VISUAL IMPRESSIONS: a show of the Union of Maine Visual Artists, Maine State Building, Poland Spring. Gallery hrs. 8-4:30 weekdays. Donation at the door to benefit Poland Spring Preservation Society.

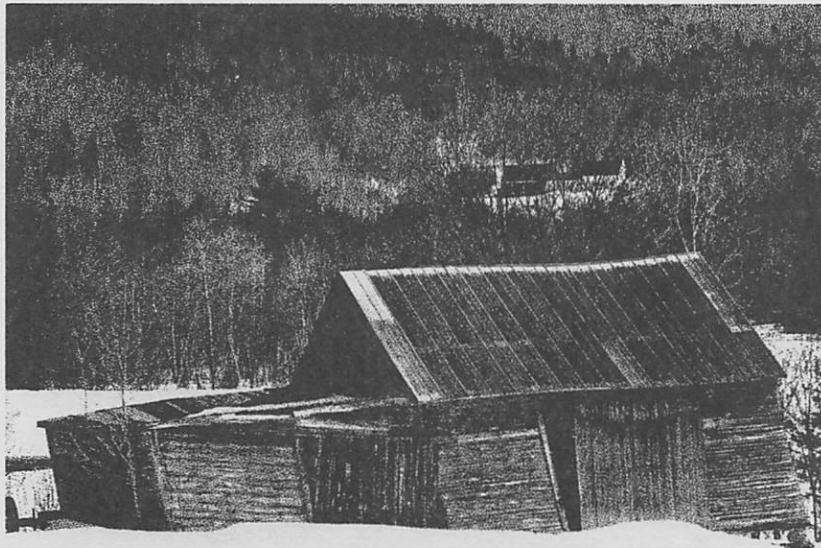
SPECTRA I: a major inter-art exhibition being planned now for May-June, 1979 at Westbrook College. Sponsored by the Maine Association for Women in the Performing Arts & Westbrook College to promote & give exposure to year-round Maine resident artists. Contributions of art, writing, theatre, music & photography by women sought. Contact Sue Ostroff, Box 168, Hallowell, ME 04347.

## SPECIALS

FARE SHARE CO-OP STORE: A non-profit, consumer-run natural food store, 123 Main Street, South Paris (up the hill). Open Thurs. 2 - 6; Fri. 2 - 8; and Sat. 10 - 5. Featuring whole natural foods, cheese, breads, local honey and cider, books. Everyone is welcome, members pay less.

THE MAINE AUDUBON SOCIETY'S WOOD FUEL PROGRAM: Offering assistance in woodland management & marketing. Call 743-6819, or write the Society Headquarters, Gilsland Farm, 118 Old Route One, Falmouth, ME.

*BitterSweet would like to list the events of your organization. Please send information by middle of the month previous to your event. Mail to BitterSweet, P.O. Box 301, Oxford, ME 04270, Attn: N. Marcotte. Sorry, we are unable to take listings over the telephone.*



*Photo by Bill Haynes*

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## THE ANSWER TO BRAINTEASER IX

The first person to correctly determine the answer to Brainteaser IX was Shirley Hodson of Fryeburg. The only other correct answers received at presstime came from Arnold & Roger Twitchell of South Paris and Rick Chase of South Waterford. All will receive a free subscription to **BitterSweet**. To determine Ann's age, the following procedure was used:

Let X be Mary's age today. Let Y be Ann's age today. Then let X plus Y equal 44 (the combined ages of Mary and Ann).

We know that Mary is twice as old as Ann was at a certain time. So, at that time, Ann was  $X/2$  years old. This happened  $Y - X/2$  years ago. Then at that time, Mary was  $X$  minus ( $Y - X/2$ ) years old. We know that this is half as old as Ann will be when Ann is three times as old as Mary was when Mary was three times as old as Ann.

Then when Ann is three times as old as Mary was when Mary was three times as old as Ann, Ann will be  $2X$  minus  $2Y$  plus X, or  $3X - 2Y$  years old. One-third of this, then, is Mary's age when Mary was three times as old as Ann. So, when Mary was three times as old as Ann, she was:

AND SO...

This happened  $X$  minus

$$\begin{array}{r} 3X - 2Y \\ \hline 3 \\ 3X - 2Y \\ \hline 3 \end{array}$$

years old  
years ago,

which reduces to:

$$\begin{array}{r} 2Y \\ \hline 3 \\ Y - 2Y \\ \hline 3 \end{array}$$

At that time, Ann was:

years old

We are told that, at that time, Mary was three times as old as Ann. Then  $3Y - 2Y$  equals  $3X - 2Y/3$ . This reduces to  $5Y$  equals  $3X$  or  $X$  equals  $5Y/3$ . Substituting this value of  $X$  in our first equation, we have  $5Y/3$  plus  $Y$  equals 44.

This quickly develops into  $8Y$  equals 132, wherefrom  $Y$  equals  $16\frac{1}{2}$ , which is the age of the celebrated Ann, and  $X$  (of course) equals  $27\frac{1}{2}$ , which is the sum total of Mary's mortal years. This, provided it escapes the dangers of typographical slips, is the absolute low-down on that ancient mentality-wrecker. No wonder it had the nation down with the flibbetty-jibbets. We're exhausted merely copying it off!

## BRAINTEASER X

Six members of a mixed hockey team are Mr. A., Mr. B., Mr. C., Mrs. D., Miss E., and Miss F. The positions they occupy are center, right wing, left wing, right defense, left defense, and goalie, though not necessarily in that order.

Mr. A. is a bachelor. Mr. B. is 20 years old. Miss E. is the left defense's step-sister. Mr. C. is the center's neighbor. The right wing is the center's grandson. The left wing is the son-in-law of the right defense. Who plays what position? (Send your answer to **BitterSweet**.)

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# Folk Tales

## OLIVE PERKINS of OXFORD

Olive Louise Perkins is an artist. She paints in oils—"primitives" with a Grandma Moses charm in which children play happily on snowy slopes, dogs race, and elves perch on ice-age rocks under the shadow of tall Maine trees.

She also creates original designs in the ancient art of wool embroidery known as "crewel."

Sandwiched in between these two artistic skills, Olive bakes superb bread, biscuits, pies and cookies; puts up jellies, jams, and vegetables; and goes about being the mistress of an historic old farmhouse. Every rug on the floor was braided by her. Afghan throws and pillow covers bearing her needlework brighten up beds and sofas. Healthy, beautiful plants hanging at sunny windows attest to her green thumb. On weekends, she entertains hoards of relatives and does most of the cooking and serving herself, (Her baked bean recipe is a family treasure.)

She is one of those exceptional women who can express themselves with creative vigor in everything they do...and who seemingly can do everything. The fact that Olive Perkins is going-on-91 seems irrelevant.



Olive Perkins in her Oxford home

In Maine, exceptional women were the rule in Olive Perkins' generation. Something about the long, daily hours of physical toil, much of it in the outdoors, and evenings spent relaxing with the family around the woodstove with needlework in hand apparently gave women like Olive that balanced blend. Add attributes of humor, optimism, self-esteem, and the precious ability to "sleep like a log" and wake refreshed, and you have Olive's secret of longevity.

Olive Perkins never set out to be an artist or a designer, but she could easily enter the field of commercial art today, if she so chose. In the past she was too much involved in the business of being wife to Merle M. Perkins, whom she married at age 18. The couple settled on the land (three miles from Oxford Village on the Poland Road) which was granted Oliver Perkins in the late 1700's. The 12-room farmhouse into which they moved was built just after the Civil War by Olive's father-in-law, Harrison Otis Perkins. Letters from him in a neatly-tied bundle are carefully kept; in them, scenes of battle are brought to life, and Harrison's own injury "from a spent cannon ball" is vividly described.

Seven generations have lived in the Perkins house. Olive gave birth to nine children under its roof, seven of whom are still living. Daughters Dorothy and Sara continue to live there with her.

At one time, 30 Ayrshires wandered the fields bordering Thompson Lake and Olive milked them all by hand, then churned from their rich cream 50 pounds or more of butter each week, and sold the surplus to neighbors and residents of nearby summer camps.

Apple trees of every description, planted by Perkins forefathers, dot her farmland and her canvasses...apples of near-extinct varieties originally brought over by the early settlers: Snows, Astrikans, Baldwins, Black Oxford, Porters, Tompkins Sweets, Sheep's Nose, "Pumpkin" apples, "Banana" apples, and Greenwoods, as well as the more familiar Cortlands, Northern Spies, and Red and Yellow Delicious. Mulberries, gooseberries, blueberries and "wickabee" (which local Indians once collected to make string) grow rampant, too. Some of the brown ash trees on the property were given by Olive's father-in-law to an old Indian who used them to make woven baskets.

The apple pie fillings and crusts which

Olive makes today are as mouthwatering as they ever were. Little boys who played with her sons half a century ago still drop by, men now in their 60's, hoping that visits will coincide with the removal of one of her famed pies from the oven. The Atlantic woodstove has seldom gone cold and "Gram" (as she's affectionately known) is always using it to invent something new in the way of cookies or cakes for her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, tossing in spices and other things with happy abandon. ("Try clarified chicken fat...it's better in a recipe than butter and doesn't cost anything.") Loaves of her Anadama or white bread, and light, fluffy biscuits smell good enough while baking to lure everyone.

Born the daughter of a French Canadian blacksmith who was known for his creative craftsmanship; Olive always liked to draw, but it wasn't until she came upon some forgotten oil paints of her daughter's that she began painting—at age 83. Her oil paintings and embroidered wall hangings and pillow covers may not outrank her baked goods in importance, but they will surely outlast them.

P.W.G.



*Two of the delightful paintings done by this 91-year-old artist*

# Homemade

*Mrs. Perkins' Favorite Recipes:*

## BAKED BEANS

- 1 tsp. salt
- dash pepper
- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- 1/3 cup molasses
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 c. dry beans, soaked overnight
- water to dissolve

The ingredients are combined and poured over the beans, then baked slowly (300° for 6-7 hours). Add more liquid as the beans require during baking. Mrs. Perkins sometimes puts an onion in for flavor, removing it before serving.

## ORANGE SPONGE CAKE

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 3 eggs        | 1 cup pastry flour   |
| 1 cup sugar   | 1 tsp. baking powder |
| 1/4 tsp. salt | grated rind 1 orange |
|               | 4 T. juice           |

Beat egg yolks until light, add sugar, rind and juice gradually, while continuing to beat. Add salt and beat until light. Fold in egg whites which have been beaten until stiff. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

## SPICE COOKIES

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 cup butter or oleo | 2 cups flour       |
| 1 1/2 cup sugar      | 2 tsp. baking soda |
| 1 egg, beaten        | 2 tsp. cinnamon    |
| 2 T. dark corn syrup | 2 tsp. ginger      |
|                      | 2 tsp. cloves      |

Cream butter or oleo; blend in beaten egg and corn syrup. Add dry ingredients, which have been sifted together. Mix well and chill. Roll on a floured board to a thickness of 1/8" and cut with a cookie cutter. Bake at 400° for 5 - 8 minutes.

# LOCAL LORE

by Nellie Hankins



## PETER JORDAN AND AN ACT OF GOD

Many New England folk tales which are told as gospel truth in one community surface—as gospel truth—in other localities, with only slight variations on the theme. However, this story, told to me by Mrs. Bertha Kenniston, a matron at Hebron Academy, is one I have never run across elsewhere. According to Mrs. Kenniston, it really happened to a man in Stoneham. If she told me his name, I have forgotten it, so I will call him Peter Jordan, although I don't know that there are in fact any Jordans in Stoneham.

Peter Jordan was a wicked man. All his neighbors knew that he was a sinner bound straight for hell. He was a blasphemer.

Like all styles, styles in sin change, and today most people do not put blasphemy high on the list. But it was not so a hundred years ago, when Peter Jordan was alive. In fact, there were people then who thought that blasphemy was the unpardonable sin.

Of course, Peter wasn't the only man in Stoneham who cussed. But the others steered clear of the Deity. They swore by "the great horned spoon" or by their "Aunt Betsy." Peter swore by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And Stoneham folks knew that "he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost is in danger of eternal damnation." Peter Jordan had it coming to him, for sure.

The Elder had done everything he could about it. One day as he was crossing Peter's back field, he saw Peter at work with his crowbar, prying rocks out of the ground he was getting ready for spring planting. Long before he saw Peter, the Elder heard him. A less resolute man would have been turned back by the wave of profanity which rocked the hillsides. But the Elder, godly man

though he was, sometimes got his own dander up to the point of letting fly a "tarnation" or a "g-ryphus." And now, as he stalked over the rocky ground, there was the wrath of the ancient prophets on his countenance and their exhortation in his voice. "Peter Jordan! The hand of the God that made you will fall upon you!"

"If the blank, blank, blank God that made me," shouted the sinner, "didn't want me to talk this blank, blank, blank way, why did he put these blank, blank, blank rocks in my field?"

The Elder had done all he could. Anyway, he was a patient man, and he knew that sooner or later, in His own time, and in His own way, the Lord Jehovah would strike down this blasphemer.

He was right. One day the sinner was shown that there is a God in Israel. One day God spoke back to Peter Jordan.

Peter was plowing. If you had seen the field he was trying to plow, you would have had some sympathy with his feelings, if not with his language. If there is a place in the world more rocky, stumpy, tussocky, and in all ways more contrary to the notion of plowing than some Maine farms are, it is

only a Vermont farm. On this particular day it seemed that Providence had used all the powers diabolic to try the soul of a man who asked nothing more than to turn a few clean, straight furrows in the sod.

Peter hadn't been able to get anyone to help him with his plowing; after all, it pays to steer clear of a person toward whom the finger of the Lord is pointing. So Peter held the plow handles himself and looped the reins over his neck as he drove the horse. Well and good so long as the soil was clear, but let the plow point strike a rock, or let the horse shy at a bumblebee! The reins yanked up with a jerk which made Peter's backbone rattle; they sawed up and down until his ears were nearly stripped from his head. What seemed to be mere pebbles at the surface turned out to be boulders which reached the hardpan four feet below. Witchgrass and brambles tangled and snarled around the plowshare. And most unbearable of all, it was a hot, sultry dog-day at a time of the year long before dog-days should come.

A storm was brewing. Already great black thunderscapes were piling up on the horizon. This was a crowning indignity: a storm which would drive a man under cover and keep him even from this tussle where the odds were all against him.

As Peter began to unhitch his horse from the plow, he burst into a stream of cursing which was still resounding above the peals of thunder when he reached the barn side of his field. As he stood there looking back at his plow canted over among the rocks and tangled weeds, Peter Jordan raised his fists and shook them at heaven and the bright flashes of lightning. He defied God.

"Not even God Almighty Himself," he shouted, "not even God Almighty could plow that field!"

And then Jehovah spoke. As Peter Jordan stood there, still with his clenched fists raised toward the sky, a blinding flash and a mighty roar sent him tumbling to the ground. The man who had dared to defy God lay there humbled and still as the stones he had cursed.

Does the story end then, with Peter Jordan's death in a thunderstorm? No, God didn't kill Peter; he just answered his challenge. When Peter stumbled up on his knees and opened his eyes, it wasn't the shock of the flash, but what he saw, that set him quaking. From the point of his plowshare where the lightning had struck, it

had cut across the field the cleanest, straightest furrow a man could ask for. Peter Jordan had said "God Almighty Himself couldn't plow that field," and God Almighty had done it.

From that day on, Peter Jordan was a changed man. From that day to the end of his life he was never heard to utter an impiety. In fact, in his old age, Peter Jordan was respected for his good influence in the community. It was the Elder himself who was most ready to say a good word for Peter. One day he was walking through the very field where years before he had heard Peter abusing everything holy. But this day Peter was not raising his voice in oaths. He was pleading earnestly with a young harum-scarum of the neighborhood, one who numbered Peter's former sin of blasphemy among his many failings. As he watched, the Elder saw Peter lead the way to a stretch of turf which had been left untouched when the rest of the field was cultivated. Peter was pointing across the field and saying in reverent tones:

"That there is the furrow that God plowed." ■

Nellie Hankins  
Otisfield

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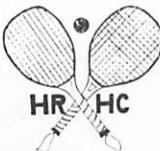
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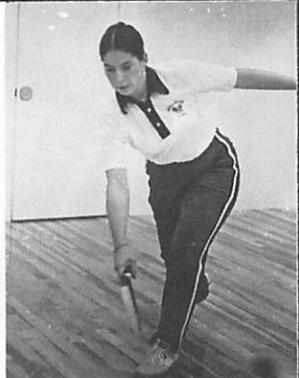


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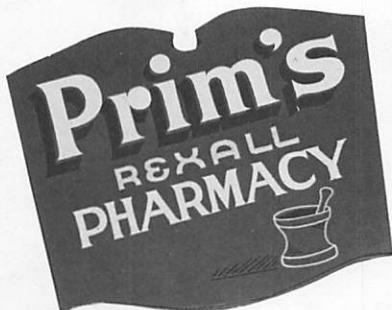
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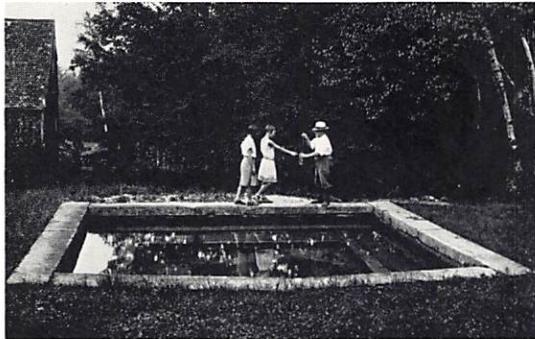
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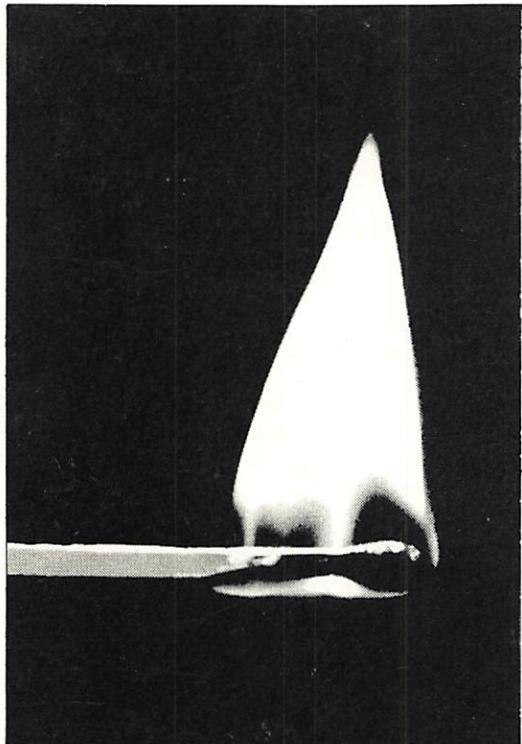
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